What is claimed is:

1. A method for evaluating a plurality of options comprising the steps of:

a) selecting and accessing type 1 databases, DB^1_i, each of said selected databases DB^1_i including at least one option rating, $OR_i(x,n)$, for one of said options, x, with respect to a dimension n, where said option x can differ among said selected databases;

b) selecting and accessing type 2 databases DB^2_j, each of said type 2 databases DB^2_j including at least one database rating $DR_j(i)$ for at least one of said databases DB^1_i;

c) associating weights, W_i with said databases DB^1_i, said weights W_i being calculated as a function of said database ratings $DR_j(i)$; and

d) calculating an overall rating R(m,n) for an option m with respect to said dimension n as a function of said weights W_i and option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$;

e) repeating step d for each remaining one of said options for which there exists at least one option rating with respect to said dimension n; and

f) generating a list of said options and associated overall ratings with respect to dimension n.

2. A method as described in claim 1 where said function of said weights W_i and said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$ is:

$$R(m,n) = \sum_i(W_i \bullet Norm(OR_i(m,n))/ \sum_i W_i;$$

a) where $Norm(OR_i(m,n)$ is a normalization of said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$, and

b) summation $\sum_i$ ranges over all of said type 1 databases DB^1_i for which said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$ are defined.

3. A method as described in claim 2 where said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$ are normalized with respect to a maximum rating $OR_i(max)$ and a minimum satisfactory rating $OR_i(sat)$ for each of said selected type 1 databases DB^1_i.

4. A method as described in claim 2 where, if said option rating $OR_i(m,n)$ is less than said minimum satisfactory $OR_i(sat)$, said normalization, $Norm(OR_i(m,n))$ is set equal to a

predetermined value; said predetermined value being less than a normalized minimum satisfactory rating $Norm(OR_i(sat))$.

5. A method as described in claim 2 where said function of said database ratings $DR_j(i)$ is:

$$W_i = \sum_j (MW_j \bullet Norm(DR_j(i)) / \sum_j MW_j;$$

a) where $Norm(DR_j(i))$ is a normalization of said database ratings $DR_j(i)$, and

b) summation $\sum_j$ ranges over all of said type 2 databases $DB^2{}_j$ for which said option ratings $DR_j(i)$ are defined; and

c) MW_j are master weights associated with said type 2 databases $DB^2{}_j$.

6. A method as described in claim 5 where said database ratings $DR^2{}_j$ are normalized with respect to a maximum rating $DR_j(max)$ and a minimum satisfactory rating $DR_j(sat)$ for each of said selected type 2 databases $DB^2{}_j$.

7. A method as described in claim 6 where, if one of said weights W_i is less than 0, said one weight is set equal to 0.

8. A method as described in claim 5 further comprising the step of adjusting said master weights MW_j based on a user's evaluation of said list.

9. A method as described in claim 8 where said adjusting step comprises the steps of:

a) said user identifying a selected choice m';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial Fm',n'(MW_j) / \partial MW_j'$; where $Fm'n'(MWj)$ is the deviation of option rating $R(m',n)$ from the mean rating, $\Sigma_m R(m,n)/M$ as a function of master weights MW_j, where M is the total number of options for which $R(m,n')$ is defined;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating steps b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

10. A method as described in claim 8 where said adjusting step comprises the steps of:

a) said user identifying a selected choice m';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial Fm',n'(MW_j)/ \partial MW_j'$; where $Fm'n'(MW_j)$ is the deviation of option rating R(m',n) from the maximum rating, max(R(m,n)) as a function of master weights MW_j;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating steps b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

11. A method as described in claim 1 where said options are rated with respect to a plurality of dimensions, comprising the further step of repeating steps d and e for each remaining one of said dimensions.

12. A method as described in claim 11 further comprising the step of adjusting said master weights MW_j based on a user's evaluation of said list.

13. A method as described in claim 12 where said adjusting step comprises the steps of:

a) said user identifying a selected choice m' and a critical dimension n';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial Fm',n'(MW_j)/ \partial MW_j'$; where $Fm',n'(MW_j)$is the deviation of option rating R(m',n') from the mean rating, $\Sigma_m R(m,n')/M$, along said critical dimension n', as a function of master weights MW_j, where M is the total number of options for which R(m,n') is defined;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating steps b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

14. A method as described in claim 12 where said adjusting step comprises the steps of:

a) said user identifying a selected choice m';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial Fm',n'(MW_j)/ \partial MW_j'$; where $Fm'n'(MW_j)$ is the deviation of option rating R(m',n) from the maximum rating, max(R(m,n)) as a function of master weights MW_j;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating steps b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

15. A data processing system, said data processing system being programmed to:

a) select and access type 1 databases, DB^1_i, each of said selected databases DB^1_i including at least one option rating, $OR_i(x,n)$, for one of said options, x, with respect to a dimension n, where said option x can differ among said selected databases;

b) select and access type 2 databases DB^2_j, each of said type 2 databases DB^2_j including at least one database rating $DR_j(i)$ for at least one of said databases DB^1_i;

c) associate weights, W_i with said databases DB^1_i, said weights W_i being calculated as a function of said database ratings $DR_j(i)$; and

d) calculate an overall rating R(m,n) for an option m with respect to said dimension n as a function of said weights W_i and option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$;

e) repeat d for each remaining one of said options for which there exists at least one option rating with respect to said dimension n; and

f) generate a list of said options and associated overall ratings with respect to dimension n.

16. A system as described in claim 15 where said system is programmed to calculate said function of said weights W_i and said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$ as:

$$R(m,n) = \sum_i(W_i \bullet Norm(OR_i(m,n))/ \sum_i W_i;$$

a) where Norm(ORi(m,n) is a normalization of said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$, and

b) summation $\sum_i$ ranges over all of said type 1 databases DB^1_i for which said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$ are defined.

17. A system as described in claim 16 where said system is programmed to normalize said option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$ with respect to a maximum rating $OR_i(max)$ and a minimum satisfactory rating $OR_i(sat)$ for each of said selected type 1 databases DB^1_i.

18. A system as described in claim 16 where said system is further programmed to, if said option rating $OR_i(m,n)$ is less than said minimum satisfactory $OR_i(sat)$, set said

normalization, Norm(OR_i(m,n)) equal to a predetermined value; said predetermined value being less than a normalized minimum satisfactory rating Norm(OR_i(sat)).

19. A system as described in claim 16 where said system is programmed to calculate said function of said database ratings $DR_j(i)$ as:

$Wi = \sum_j(MW_j \bullet Norm(DR_j(i))/ \sum_j MW_j$;

a) where Norm($DR_j(i)$) is a normalization of said database ratings $DR_j(i)$, and

b) summation $\sum_j$ ranges over all of said type 2 databases DB^2_j for which said option ratings $DR_j(i)$ are defined; and

c) MW_j are master weights associated with said type 2 databases DB^2_j.

20. A system as described in claim 19 where said system is programmed to normalize said database ratings DR^2_j with respect to a maximum rating DR_j(max) and a minimum satisfactory rating DR_j(sat) for each of said selected type 2 databases DB^2_j.

21. A system as described in claim 20 where said system is further programmed to, if one of said weights W_i is less than 0, set said one weight equal to 0.

22. A system as described in claim 19 where said system is further programmed to adjust said master weights MW_j based on a user's evaluation of said list.

23. A system as described in claim 22 where said system is programmed to adjust said master weights MW_j by:

a) identifying said user's selected choice m';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial Fm',n'(MW_j)/ \partial MW_j'$; where $Fm',n'(MW_j)$ is the deviation of option rating R(m',n) from the mean rating, $\Sigma_m R(m,n)/M$ as a function of master weights MW_j, where M is the total number of options for which R(m,n') is defined;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

24. A system as described in claim 22 where said adjusting step comprises the steps of:

a) said user identifying a selected choice m';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial Fm',n'(MW_j)/ \partial MW_j'$; where $Fm'n'(MW_j)$ is the deviation of option rating R(m',n) from the maximum rating, max(R(m,n)) as a function of master weights MW_j;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating steps b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

25. A system as described in claim 23 where said system is programmed to rate said options with respect to a plurality of dimensions and to repeat d and e for each remaining one of said dimensions.

26. A system as described in claim 25 where said system is further programmed to adjust said master
weights MW_j based on a user's evaluation of said list.

27. A system as described in claim 26 where said system is programmed to adjust said master weights MW_j by:

a) said user identifying said user selected choice m' and a critical dimension n';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial\, Fm',n'(MW_j)/ \partial\, MW_j'$; where $Fm',n'(MW_j)$ is the deviation of option rating R(m',n') from the mean rating, $\Sigma_m R(m,n')/M$, along said critical dimension n', as a function of master weights MW_j, where M is the total number of options for which R(m,n') is defined;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

28. A system as described in claim 26 where said system is programmed to adjust said master weights MW_j by::

a) said user identifying a selected choice m';

b) calculating a partial derivative $P(MW_j') = \partial Fm',n'(MW_j)/ \partial MW_j'$; where $Fm'n'(MW_j)$ is the deviation of option rating $R(m',n)$ from the maximum rating, $\max(R(m,n))$ as a function of master weights MW_j;

c) setting $MW_j' = MW_j'(1 + \alpha P(MW_j'))$, where α is a small positive number; and

d) repeating steps b and c for all remaining master weights MW_j.

29. A computer readable medium for providing instructions to a data processing system, said instructions controlling said data processing system to:

a) select and access type 1 databases, DB^1_i, each of said selected databases DB^1_i including at least one option rating, $OR_i(x,n)$, for one of said options, x, with respect to a dimension n, where said option x can differ among said selected databases;

b) select and access type 2 databases DB^2_j, each of said type 2 databases DB^2_j including at least one database rating $DR_j(i)$ for at least one of said databases DB^1_i;

c) associate weights, W_i with said databases DB^1_i, said weights W_i being calculated as a function of said database ratings $DR_j(i)$; and

d) calculate an overall rating $R(m,n)$ for an option m with respect to said dimension n as a function of said weights W_i and option ratings $OR_i(m,n)$;

e) repeat d for each remaining one of said options for which there exists at least one option rating with respect to said dimension n; and

f) generate a list of said options and associated overall ratings with respect to dimension n.